

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

**GAMING DEVICE HAVING MULTIPLE SELECTION GROUPS WITH
RELATED PICKS**

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S P E C I F I C A T I O N

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

5 **"GAMING DEVICE HAVING MULTIPLE SELECTION GROUPS WITH
RELATED PICKS"**

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15 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates in general to a gaming device, and in particular to a gaming device having a game such as a base or bonus game with multiple selection groups that increase player excitement and enjoyment.

20 Gaming machines currently exist with bonus schemes in which the player has one or more opportunities to choose a particular selection or symbol from a group of symbols. When a player chooses a symbol, existing games will either award the player a bonus value or terminate the bonus round. The outcome depends upon the particular
25 symbol selected by the player.

In one existing game, when the player selects a masked symbol that awards a bonus value, the player receives the value and is provided with another chance to select another masked symbol. Each time the player selects an award symbol, the game provides the
30 associated award and prompts the player to make another selection. The player then selects another symbol and the process continues until the player selects a symbol that terminates the bonus round. When the player selects a masked end-bonus symbol, the game displays a

message such as "COLLECT". That message indicates that the bonus round has terminated, and the player collects any accrued values.

In the above type of game, the gaming device is programmed so that in each bonus round a certain number of symbols yield awards
5 and a certain number of symbols end the game. The player selects value-associated outcomes from a finite number of selections until selecting an "end-bonus" outcome. While that game offers advantages in player appeal and excitement, there is a continuing need to develop new types of bonus games, which further enhance the level of player
10 interaction, excitement and enjoyment.

U.S. Patent No. 6,439,995, assigned to the assignee of the present invention, discloses a game ('the '995 game") having multiple selection groups, wherein the player advances from one group to the next when the player selects an "advance" symbol. That is, the player
15 picks selections from a group until reaching an "advance". In the '995 game, the player wants to delay the pick of the "advance" as much as possible to collect as many awards as possible before receiving the "advance". Unlike the first game, however, when the player picks the "advance" in the '995 game the player proceeds to another selection
20 group rather than to an end game outcome. The '995 game has achieved a certain level of commercial success. Nevertheless, a need exists to develop new pick-until type games with multiple selection groups.

25

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a wagering game of a gaming device that can be implemented as a base or primary game or as a bonus or secondary game triggered by the base or primary game. The game includes a plurality of levels of selections and provides the player
30 with a number of picks of the selections. When the player makes a pick from one of the selection levels, the game reveals an outcome. The outcome can be a "repeat" or "try again" outcome, wherein the pick counts and the player picks again from the same level. The outcome

can be an “advance” or “correct” outcome, wherein the pick counts against the player’s picks and the player picks from a next selection level. The outcome can also be a “pass” outcome, wherein the pick does not count against the player’s total picks, and which enables the
5 player to pick from a next selection level. Although not discussed in connection with one of the drawings, the present invention includes an optional “stay” outcome, which requires the player to pick again from the same selection group but does not count against the player’s total picks. In general, the player’s awards increases as the player
10 advances through the levels.

In one embodiment, the gaming device provides the different selection levels on different screens of a video monitor. That is, after playing one level, the gaming device displays another screen. In an alternative embodiment, the gaming device provides multiple selection
15 groups on the same screen of the video monitor. In one preferred embodiment, a touch screen operates with a video monitor to allow the player to simply pick the area of the display device displaying the desired selection. In another alternative embodiment, an additional outcome is possible, wherein the player picks again from the same
20 selection group, but wherein the next pick does not count against the player’s total number of picks.

In one embodiment, the game of the present invention is played via a game show theme. The game show presents a clue to the player and displays a plurality of selections that each relate to the clue. The
25 game prompts the player to pick one of the selections. After picking one of the selections, the game reveals whether the player has to “try again” (i.e., the player has not picked the “correct” answer), or whether the player advances to the next selection level. The player can advance to the next selection level by picking a “correct” outcome or by
30 picking a “pass” outcome. The “correct” outcome advances the player to the next selection level but counts against the player’s total picks. Again, the “pass” selection advances the player to the next selection level but does not count against the player’s total number of picks. In

an alternative embodiment, the “pass” selection could count against the player’s total number of picks.

The wagering game is structured so that the player wins more by picking in higher selection levels than does the player by picking in lower selection levels. The wagering game accomplishes this feature in one of a number of different manners. In one embodiment, the wagering game assigns or associates awards with the different outcomes of the player’s picks. Awards may or may not be assigned to any combination of the “try again” outcome, the “correct” outcome, and the “pass” outcome. As the levels increase, the awards associated with each of the one or more outcomes also increase. In another embodiment, the wagering game provides an award upon reaching the next level. Here, the gaming device in essence provides the award for obtaining either the “correct” or “pass” outcome. In still another embodiment, the wagering game only provides an award for achieving either the “pass” or the “correct” outcome.

In one embodiment, the final level displays selections that provide relatively high value awards to the player. In one embodiment, due to the finality of the level, the selections do not yield the “correct” or “pass” outcomes. In one embodiment, however, the wagering game allows the player to go back to a selection level in which a player received a “pass” if the player has remaining picks after picking each of the selections in the final selection group.

After exhausting each of player’s picks, the wagering game provides the accumulated award to the player. The award is provided in one or more of a varying number of manners. In one embodiment, the award is a number of credits for the gaming device. In another embodiment, the award is a multiplier of gaming device credits. In still another embodiment, the award is a non-monetary award, such as a free meal, merchandise or other similar benefit.

It is therefore an advantage of the present invention to provide a game with multiple selection levels.

Another advantage of the present invention to provide a game with a visually entertaining display.

A further advantage of the present invention to provide a game that is fun and exciting to play.

Another advantage of the present invention to provide a game involving multiple player picks and an element of perceived skill.

5 Additional features and advantages of the present invention are described in, and will be apparent from, the following Detailed Description of the Invention and the figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

10 Figs. 1A and 1B are front perspective views of various embodiments of a slot machine embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

15 Fig. 2 is a schematic block diagram of the electronic configuration of one embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

Fig. 2A is a schematic block diagram of various gaming devices employing the wagering game of the present invention, wherein the devices are networked or controlled remotely.

20 Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 are elevation views of various screen shots of the gaming device illustrating one embodiment of the multiple selection level game of the present invention.

Fig. 13 is an elevation view of a screen shot of the gaming device illustrating an alternative embodiment for the multiple selection level game of the present invention.

25 Fig. 14 is a schematic representation of an area of memory within the gaming device that stores the different awards for the different award levels.

Fig. 15 is a schematic representation of an area of memory within the gaming device that stores different outcome profiles for 30 different award levels.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to the drawings, two alternative embodiments of the gaming device of the present invention are illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B as gaming device 10a and gaming device 10b, respectively.

5 Gaming device 10a and/or gaming device 10b are generally referred to herein as gaming device 10.

In one embodiment, gaming device 10 has a support structure, housing or cabinet which provides support for a plurality of displays, inputs, controls and other features of a conventional gaming machine.

10 It is configured so that a player can operate it while standing or sitting. The gaming device may be positioned on a base or stand or can be configured as a pub-style table-top game (not shown) which a player can operate preferably while sitting. Gaming device 10 can be constructed with varying cabinet and display configurations, as

15 illustrated by the different configurations shown in Figs. 1A and 1B.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Fig. 2, the gaming device preferably includes at least one processor 38, such as a microprocessor, a microcontroller-based platform, a suitable integrated circuit or one or more application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC's).

20 The processor is in communication with or operable to access or to exchange signals with at least one data storage or memory device 40. In one embodiment, the processor and the memory device reside within the cabinet of the gaming device. The memory device stores program code and instructions, executable by the processor, to control

25 the gaming device. The memory device also stores other data such as image data, event data, player input data, random or pseudo-random number generators, pay-table data or other operating data, information and applicable game rules that relate to the play of the gaming device. In another embodiment, the memory device includes random access

30 memory (RAM). In one embodiment, the memory device includes read only memory (ROM). In a further embodiment, the memory device includes flash memory and/or EEPROM (electrically erasable programmable read only memory). Any other suitable magnetic,

optical and/or semiconductor memory may be implemented in conjunction with the gaming device of the present invention.

In one embodiment, part or all of the program code and/or operating data described above can be stored in a detachable or
5 removable memory device, including, but not limited to, a suitable cartridge, disk or CD ROM. A player can use such a removable memory device in a desktop, a laptop personal computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA) or other computerized platform. The processor and memory device may be collectively referred to herein as a
10 "computer" or "controller."

In one embodiment, as discussed in more detail below, the gaming device randomly generates awards and/or other game outcomes based on probability data. That is, each award or other game outcome is associated with a probability and the gaming device
15 generates the award or other game outcome to be provided to the player based on the associated probabilities. In this embodiment, since the gaming device generates outcomes randomly or based upon a probability calculation, there is no certainty that the gaming device will provide the player with any specific award or other game outcome.
20

In another embodiment, as discussed in more detail below, the gaming device employs a predetermined or finite set or pool of awards or other game outcomes. In this embodiment, as each award or other game outcome is provided to the player, the gaming device removes the provided award or other game outcome from the predetermined set
25 or pool. Once removed from the set or pool, the specific provided award or other game outcome cannot be provided to the player again. In this type of embodiment, the gaming device provides players with all of the available awards or other game outcomes over the course of the play cycle and guarantees a designated amount of actual wins and
30 losses.

In one embodiment, gaming device 10 includes one or more display devices controlled by the processor. The display devices are preferably connected to or mounted to the cabinet of the gaming device. The embodiment shown in Fig. 1A includes a central display

device 30 which displays a primary game. This display device may also display any suitable secondary game associated with the primary game as well as information relating to the primary or secondary game.

5 The alternative embodiment shown in Fig. 1B includes a central display device 30 and an upper display device 32. The upper display device may display the primary game, any suitable secondary game associated with the primary game and/or information relating to the primary or secondary game. As seen in Figs. 1A and 1B, in one embodiment, the gaming device includes a credit display 16 which

10 displays a player's current number of credits, cash, account balance or the equivalent. In one embodiment, the gaming device includes a bet display 22 which displays a player's amount wagered.

The display devices may include, without limitation, a monitor, a television display, a plasma display, a liquid crystal display ("LCD"), a

15 display based on light emitting diodes ("LED") or any other suitable electronic device or display mechanism. In one embodiment, as described in more detail below, the display device includes a touch-screen with an associated touch-screen controller. The display devices may be of any suitable configuration, such as a square, a rectangle or

20 an elongated rectangle.

The display devices of the gaming device are configured to display at least one and preferably a plurality of games or other suitable images, symbols and indicia such as any visual representation or exhibition of the movement of objects such as mechanical, virtual or

25 video reels and wheels, dynamic lighting, video images and images of people, characters, places, things and faces of cards, tournament advertisements, promotions and the like.

In one alternative embodiment, the symbols, images and indicia displayed on or by the display device may be in mechanical form. That

30 is, the display device may include any suitable electromechanical device which preferably moves one or more mechanical objects, such as one or more mechanical rotatable wheels, reels or dice, configured to display at least one and preferably a plurality of games or other suitable images, symbols or indicia.

In one embodiment, the gaming machine includes a camera in communication with the processor that is selectively positioned to acquire an image of a player actively using the gaming device and/or the surrounding area of the gaming device. In one embodiment, the

5 camera may be configured to selectively acquire still or moving (e.g., video) images and may be configured to acquire the images in either an analog, digital or other suitable format. The display device may be configured to display the image acquired by the camera as well as display the visible manifestation of the game in split screen or picture-in-picture fashion. For example, the camera may acquire an image of the player and that image can be incorporated into the primary and/or secondary game as a game image, symbol or indicia.

10

In one embodiment, as seen in Fig. 2, the gaming device includes a sound generating device controlled by one or more sounds cards 42 which function in conjunction with the processor. In one embodiment, the sound generating device includes at least one and preferably a plurality of speakers 36 or other sound generating hardware and/or software for generating sounds, such as playing music for the primary and/or secondary game or for other modes of the

15 gaming device, such as an attract mode. In one embodiment, the gaming device provides dynamic sounds coupled with attractive multimedia images displayed on one or more of the display devices to provide an audio-visual representation or to otherwise display full-motion video with sound to attract players to the gaming device.

20

25 During idle periods, the gaming device may display a sequence of audio and/or visual attraction messages to attract potential players to the gaming device. The videos may also be customized for or to provide any appropriate information.

As illustrated in Fig. 2, in one embodiment, the gaming device

30 includes at least one payment acceptor 58 in communication with the processor. As seen in Figs. 1A and 1B, the payment acceptor may include a coin slot 12 and a payment, note or bill acceptor 14, where the player inserts money, coins or tokens. The player can place coins in the coin slot or paper money, ticket or voucher into the payment,

note or bill acceptor. In other embodiments, devices such as readers or validators for credit cards, debit cards, data cards or credit slips could be used for accepting payment. In one embodiment, a player may insert an identification card into a card reader of the gaming device. In one embodiment, the identification card is a smart card having a programmed microchip or a magnetic strip coded with a player's identification, credit totals and other relevant information. In one embodiment, money may be transferred to a gaming device through electronic funds transfer. When a player funds the gaming device, the processor determines the amount of funds entered and the corresponding amount is shown on the credit or other suitable display as described above.

As seen in Figs. 1A, 1B and 2, in one embodiment the gaming device includes at least one and preferably a plurality of input devices 44 in communication with the processor. The input devices can include any suitable device which enables the player to produce an input signal which is read by the processor. In one embodiment, after appropriate funding of the gaming device, the input device is a game activation device, such as a pull arm 18 or a play button 20 which is used by the player to start any primary game or sequence of events in the gaming device. The play button can be any suitable play activator such as a bet one button, a max bet button or a "repeat" bet button. In one embodiment, upon appropriate funding, the gaming device begins the game play automatically. In another embodiment, upon the player engaging one of the play buttons, the gaming device automatically activates game play.

In one embodiment, as shown in Figs. 1A and 1B, one input device is a bet one button 24. The player places a bet by pushing the bet one button. The player can increase the bet by one credit each time the player pushes the bet one button. When the player pushes the bet one button, the number of credits shown in the credit display preferably decreases by one, and the number of credits shown in the bet display preferably increases by one. In another embodiment, one input device is a bet max button (not shown) which enables the player to bet the

maximum wager permitted for a game associated with the gaming device.

In one embodiment, one input device is a cash out button 26. The player may push the cash out button and cash out to receive a
5 cash payment or other suitable form of payment corresponding to the number of remaining credits. In one embodiment, when the player cashes out, the player receives the coins or tokens in a coin payout tray 28. In one embodiment, when the player cashes out, the player may receive other payout mechanisms such as tickets or credit slips
10 which are redeemable by a cashier or funded to the player's electronically recordable identification card.

In one embodiment, as mentioned above and seen in Fig. 2, one input device is a touch-screen 50 coupled with a touch-screen controller 52, or some other touch-sensitive display overlay to allow for
15 player interaction with the images on the display. The touch-screen and the touch-screen controller are connected to a video controller 54. A player can make decisions and input signals into the gaming device by touching the touch-screen at the appropriate places.

The gaming device may further include a plurality of
20 communication ports for enabling communication of the processor with external peripherals, such as external video sources, expansion buses, game or other displays, an SCSI port or a key pad.

The gaming device can incorporate any suitable wagering primary or base game. The gaming machine or device of the present
25 invention may include some or all of the features of conventional gaming machines or devices. The primary or base game may comprise any suitable reel-type game, card game, number game or other game of chance susceptible to representation in an electronic or electromechanical form which produces a random outcome based on
30 probability data upon activation of the game from a wager made by the player. That is, different primary wagering games, such as video poker games, video blackjack games, video keno, video bingo or any other suitable primary or base game may be implemented into the present invention.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B, a base or primary game may be a slot game with one or more paylines 56. The paylines may be horizontal, vertical, circular, diagonal, angled or any combination thereof. In this embodiment, the gaming device displays

5 at least one reel and preferably a plurality of reels 34, such as three to five reels, in either electromechanical form with mechanical rotating reels or in video form with simulated reels and movement thereof. In one embodiment, an electromechanical slot machine includes a plurality of adjacent, rotatable wheels which may be combined and

10 operably coupled with an electronic display of any suitable type. In another embodiment, if the reels are in video form, the plurality of simulated video reels are displayed on one or more of the display devices as described above. Each reel displays a plurality of indicia such as bells, hearts, fruits, numbers, letters, bars or other images

15 which preferably correspond to a theme associated with the gaming device. In this embodiment, the gaming device awards prizes when the reels of the primary game stop spinning if specified types and/or configurations of indicia or symbols occur on an active pay line or otherwise occur in a winning combination or pattern.

20 In one embodiment, a base or primary game may be a poker game wherein the gaming device enables the player to play a conventional game of video poker and initially deals five cards, all face up, from a virtual deck of fifty-two cards. Cards may be dealt as in a traditional game of cards or in the case of the gaming device, the cards

25 may be randomly selected from a predetermined number of cards. If the player wishes to draw, the player selects the cards to hold by using one or more input devices, such as pressing related hold buttons or touching a corresponding area on a touch-screen. After the player presses the deal button, the processor of the gaming device removes

30 the unwanted or discarded cards from the display and deals replacement cards from the remaining cards in the deck. This results in a final five-card hand. The processor of the gaming device compares the final five-card hand to a payout table which utilizes conventional poker hand rankings to determine the winning hands.

Award based on a winning hand and the credits wagered is provided to the player.

- In another embodiment, the base or primary game may be a multi-hand version of video poker. In this embodiment, the player is
- 5 dealt at least two hands of cards. In one such embodiment, the cards in all of the dealt hands are the same cards. In one embodiment each hand of cards is associated with its own deck of cards. The player chooses the cards to hold in a primary hand. The held cards in the primary hand are also held in the other hands of cards. The remaining
- 10 non-held cards are removed from each displayed hand and replaced with randomly dealt cards. Since the replacement cards are randomly dealt independently for each hand, the replacement cards will usually be different for each hand. The poker hand rankings are then determined hand by hand and awards are provided to the player.
- 15 In one embodiment, a base or primary game may be a keno game wherein the gaming device displays a plurality of selectable indicia or numbers on at least one of the display devices. In this embodiment, the player selects at least one and preferably a plurality of the selectable indicia or numbers by using an input device or by
- 20 using the touch-screen. The gaming device then displays a series of drawn numbers to determine an amount of matches, if any, between the player's selected numbers and the gaming device's drawn numbers. The player is provided an award, if any, based on the amount of determined matches.
- 25 In one embodiment, in addition to winning credits in a base or primary game, the gaming device may also give players the opportunity to win credits in a bonus or secondary game or bonus or secondary round. The bonus or secondary game enables the player to obtain a bonus prize or payout in addition to the prize or payout, if any, obtained
- 30 from the base or primary game. In general, a bonus or secondary game produces a significantly higher level of player excitement than the base or primary game because it provides a greater expectation of winning than the base or primary game and is accompanied with more attractive or unusual features than the base or primary game.

In one embodiment, the bonus or secondary game may be any type of suitable game, either similar to or completely different from the base or primary game. In one embodiment, the gaming device includes a program code which causes the processor to automatically begin a

5 bonus round when the player has achieved a triggering event, a qualifying condition or other designated game event in the base or primary game. In one embodiment, the triggering event or qualifying condition may be a selected outcome in the primary game or a particular arrangement of one or more indicia on a display device in the

10 primary game, such as the number seven appearing on three adjacent reels along a payline in the primary slot game embodiment seen in Figs. 1A and 1B. In another embodiment, the triggering event or qualifying condition may be triggered by exceeding a certain amount of game play (number of games, number of credits, amount of time),

15 earning a specified number of points during game play or as a random award.

In one embodiment, once a player has qualified for a bonus game, the player may subsequently enhance their bonus game participation by returning to the base or primary game for continued play. Thus, for each bonus qualifying event, such as a bonus symbol, that the player obtains, a given number of bonus game wagering points or credits may be accumulated in a "bonus meter" programmed to accrue the bonus wagering credits or entries toward eventual participation in a bonus game. The occurrence of multiple bonus

20 qualifying events in the primary game may result in an arithmetic or geometric increase in the number of bonus wagering credits awarded. In one embodiment, extra bonus wagering credits may be redeemed during the bonus game to extend play of the bonus game.

In one embodiment, no separate entry fee or buy in for a bonus game need be employed. That is, a player may not purchase an entry into a bonus game. The player must win or earn entry through play of the primary game, thereby encouraging play of the primary game. In another embodiment, qualification of the bonus or secondary game could be accomplished through a simple "buy in" by the player if, for

example, the player has been unsuccessful at qualifying for the bonus game through other specified activities.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Fig. 2A, one or more of the gaming devices 10 of the present invention may be connected to a
5 data network or a remote communication link 62 with some or all of the functions of each gaming device provided at a central location 60 such as a central server or controller. More specifically, the processor of each gaming device may be designed to facilitate transmission of signals between the individual gaming device and the central server or
10 controller.

In one embodiment, the game outcome provided to the player is determined by a central server or controller and provided to the player at the gaming device of the present invention. In this embodiment, each of a plurality of such gaming devices are in communication with
15 the central server or controller. Upon a player initiating game play at one of the gaming devices, the initiated gaming device communicates a game outcome request to the central server or controller.

In one embodiment, the central server or controller receives the game outcome request and randomly generates a game outcome for
20 the primary game based on probability data. In another embodiment, the central server or controller randomly generates a game outcome for the secondary game based on probability data. In another embodiment, the central server or controller randomly generates a game outcome for both the primary game and the secondary game
25 based on probability data. In this embodiment, the central server or controller is capable of storing and utilizing program code or other data similar to the processor and memory device of the gaming device.

In an alternative embodiment, the central server or controller maintains one or more predetermined pools or sets of predetermined
30 game outcomes. In this embodiment, the central server or controller receives the game outcome request and independently selects a predetermined game outcome from a set or pool of game outcomes. The central server or controller flags or marks the selected game outcome as used. Once a game outcome is flagged as used, it is

prevented from further selection from the set or pool and cannot be selected by the central controller or server upon another wager. The provided game outcome can include a primary game outcome, a secondary game outcome, primary and secondary game outcomes, or

5 a series of game outcomes such as free games.

The central server or controller communicates the generated or selected game outcome to the initiated gaming device. The gaming device receives the generated or selected game outcome and provides the game outcome to the player. In an alternative embodiment, how

10 the generated or selected game outcome is to be presented or displayed to the player, such as a reel symbol combination of a slot machine or a hand of cards dealt in a card game, is also determined by the central server or controller and communicated to the initiated gaming device to be presented or displayed to the player. Central

15 production or control can assist a gaming establishment or other entity in maintaining appropriate records, controlling gaming, reducing and/or preventing cheating or electronic or other errors, reducing or eliminating win-loss volatility and the like.

In another embodiment, one or more of the gaming devices of

20 the present invention are in communication with a central server or controller for monitoring purposes only. That is, each individual gaming device randomly generates the game outcomes to be provided to the player and the central server or controller monitors the activities and events occurring on the plurality of gaming devices. In one

25 embodiment, the gaming network includes a real-time or an on-line accounting and gaming information system operably coupled to the central server or controller. The accounting and gaming information system of this embodiment includes a player database for storing player profiles, a player tracking module for tracking players and a

30 credit system for providing automated casino transactions.

A plurality of the gaming devices of the present invention are capable of being connected to a data network. In one embodiment, the data network is a local area network (LAN), in which one or more of the gaming devices are substantially proximate to each other and an on-

site central server or controller as in, for example, a gaming establishment or a portion of a gaming establishment. In another embodiment, the data network is a wide area network (WAN) in which one or more of the gaming devices are in communication with at least 5 one off-site central server or controller. In this embodiment, the plurality of gaming devices may be located in a different part of the gaming establishment or within a different gaming establishment than the off-site central server or controller. Thus, the WAN may include an off-site central server or controller and an off-site gaming device 10 located within gaming establishments in the same geographic area, such as a city or state. The WAN gaming system of the present invention may be substantially identical to the LAN gaming system described above, although the number of gaming devices in each system may vary relative to each other.

15 In another embodiment, the data network is an internet or intranet. In this embodiment, the operation of the gaming device can be viewed at the gaming device with at least one internet browser. In this embodiment, operation of the gaming device and accumulation of credits may be accomplished with only a connection to the central 20 server or controller (the internet/intranet server or webserver) through a conventional phone or other data transmission line, digital signal line (DSL), T-1 line, coaxial cable, fiber optic cable, wireless gateway or other suitable connection. In this embodiment, players may access an internet game page from any location where an internet connection and 25 computer, or other internet facilitator are available. The expansion in the number of computers and number and speed of internet connections in recent years increases opportunities for players to play from an ever-increasing number of remote sites. It should be appreciated that enhanced bandwidth of digital wireless 30 communications may render such technology suitable for some or all communications according to the present invention, particularly if such communications are encrypted. Higher data transmission speeds may be useful for enhancing the sophistication and response of the display and interaction with the player.

In another embodiment, a plurality of gaming devices at one or more gaming sites may be networked to a central server in a progressive configuration, as known in the art, wherein a portion of each wager to initiate a base or primary game may be allocated to 5 bonus or secondary event awards. In one embodiment, a host site computer is coupled to a plurality of the central servers at a variety of mutually remote gaming sites for providing a multi-site linked progressive automated gaming system. In one embodiment, a host site computer may serve gaming devices distributed throughout a 10 number of properties at different geographical locations including, for example, different locations within a city or different cities within a state.

In one embodiment, the host site computer is maintained for the overall operation and control of the system. In this embodiment, a host 15 site computer oversees the entire progressive gaming system and is the master for computing all progressive jackpots. All participating gaming sites report to, and receive information from, the host site computer. Each central server computer is responsible for all data communication between the gaming device hardware and software and 20 the host site computer.

Game

Referring now to Figs. 3 to 12, one embodiment of the multiple level selection game of the present invention is illustrated. Those figures show example screen shots of the game, which can be 25 displayed singly on display device 30 or 32 or in combination with one or more other screen shots simultaneously on display device 30 or 32. The wagering game of Figs. 3 to 12 is explained in combination with an award table 70 illustrated in connection with Fig. 14. Figs. 3 to 12 are various screen shots displayed on one of the display devices 30 or 32, 30 wherein each screen shot shows a different award level. In an alternative embodiment, one or more screen shots includes or displays a plurality of selection levels.

The game is illustrated via a game show format, wherein the game provides clues to the player and the player picks a selection from a plurality of selections based on the clues. The game, in one embodiment, employs perceived skill by providing certain selections having indicia that relate more closely to a given clue than other selections. The game, however, can be controlled via random generation.

Fig. 3 illustrates a first screen 80 that is displayed on display device 30 or 32. The game informs the player via an audio, visual or audiovisual message 82 of the level from which the player is currently picking. In screen 80, the player picks from the first level out of a total of five levels. The game is adaptable to provide any suitable number of selection levels. Picks remaining indicator 84 shows the player the total number of picks that the player has to pick from each of the selection levels.

In the illustrated embodiment, the wagering game provides eight initial picks to the player. Award meter 86 shows the player's accumulated award. The awards of the present invention are: gaming device credits, a multiplier of gaming device credits, a number of picks from a prize pool, a number of free games, a number of free spins, a non-monetary award and any combination thereof. The game provides a clue to the player and prompts the player to pick one of the selections as seen by audio, visual or audiovisual message 88.

The player reads the clue, namely, the words "small, purple", and chooses from one of the selections 90 to 96, each of which display the respective indicia, "grape", "hats", "monsters" and "plums". As illustrated by screen 80 of Fig. 3, player 100 picks the "grape" selection 90. The game then illustrates the result of that pick, namely, the "try again" outcome 102. The player's picks transition from eight to seven as seen in meter 84. The player receives an award of five, which is dictated by the "try again" column for level one in award table 70 of Fig. 14.

The "try again" outcome counts as a pick from the player's total number of picks and also requires the player to pick again from the

same level, e.g., level one. The player obtains an award of five for achieving the “try again” outcome 102 in the illustrated embodiment. In another embodiment, the player does not win an amount upon picking the “try again” outcome 102.

- 5 The game distributes the outcomes upon the player picks in one of a variety of ways. In one embodiment, the wagering game assigns or associates the outcomes to the selections 90 to 96. In another embodiment, the game assigns the outcomes to the order of the pick with respect to other picks. That is, the gaming device associates a
10 first outcome with the first pick and a second outcome with a second pick. This latter embodiment makes the selection that the player picks irrelevant. The player’s entire game in that manner can be randomly determined prior to the time the player begins play.

Screen 80 of Fig. 3 illustrates one aspect of the game of the present invention, which is perceived skill. The selection 90 that displays the “grape” indicia and the selection 96 that displays the “plums” indicia are logically more closely related to the clue of “small, purple” than are the hats selection 92 and the monsters selection 94. The player 100 may thereby be enticed to pick selection 90 or selection
20 96 rather than selections 92 and 94. In reality, the indicia does not have any bearing on the outcome of the player’s pick. The preset game is one of luck, not skill.

Screen 104 of Fig. 4 illustrates that the player’s next pick is the “plums” selection 96. The game provides the same clue 88 and indicates that the player is still operating at the first selection level, as indicated by level indicator 82. Picks remaining meter 84 shows that the player’s remaining picks has dropped to six.

The pick of the “plum” selection 96 again produces the “try again” outcome 102. Per the award table 70 of Fig. 14, the player
30 receives again an award of five, resulting in a total accumulated award of ten as seen in meter 86.

Display 106 of Fig. 5 shows that the player’s next pick is the “hats” selection 92. In screen 106, the game again provides the message 88 and instructs the player to pick one of the selections. In

the illustrated embodiment, the game does not allow the player to repick a previously picked selection and shows cross-out indicia indicating same. In an alternative embodiment, the player can pick the same selection twice, e.g., when outcomes are tied to the order of the

5 pick rather than to the selection picked. In Fig. 5, the player is still currently at the first selection level as indicated by level indicator 82. The pick of the "hats" selection 92 yields a "correct" or "advance" outcome 108. As discussed above, the "advance" or "correct" outcome 108 counts against the player's total picks but allows the player to pick

10 from the next highest or subsequent selection level. The picks remaining meter 84 shows that the player now has five remaining picks. The award meter 86 shows, according to table 70 of Fig. 14, that the player's award has currently accumulated by ten to twenty.

In Fig. 6, level indicator 82 shows that the player now picks from

15 the second of five levels. The game displays a new clue, namely, the word "taxi". The game instructs the player to pick one of the selections via an audio, visual or audiovisual message 112.

In the second level, the game displays four new selections 114, 116, 118 and 122. Each of the selections relates to or provides an

20 answer for the clue 112. The player 100 picks the "things you pay for" selection 116, which yields the "pass" outcome 124. As discussed above, the "pass" outcome allows the player to advance to the next or subsequent selection level without consuming a pick. In the illustrated embodiment, the "pass" outcome 124 also provides an award of thirty

25 to the player per award table 70 of Fig. 14. The player's remaining picks accordingly remain at five as illustrated by picks remaining meter 84. The player's award increases to fifty as seen in display 86.

Screen 120 of Fig. 7 shows that the player now picks from the third of five selection levels as illustrated by indicator 82. The game

30 provides a new clue 126, which is the clue "swimming _____. "

Message 126 also informs the player to pick one of the selections. Selections 128, 132, 134 and 136 each display a word, namely, words "pool", "trunks", "lessons", and "stroke" all of which complete the phrase

"swimming _____. " As illustrated by screen 120, player 100 picks the "trunks" selection 132, which yields the "try again" outcome 102.

As discussed above, the "try again" outcome requires the player's next pick to be from the same selection level and costs the 5 player a pick, as illustrated by meter 84. The player receives an award of fifteen as illustrated by award meter 86. Table 70 illustrates that the "try again" outcome awards increase by five for each award level.

Screen 130 of Fig. 8 shows again the message 126 and the 10 selections 128, 132, 134 and 136 as described above in Fig. 7. Player 100 picks again from award level three of five as illustrated by level indicator 82. The player 100 picks the "stroke" selection 136, which again yields the "try again" outcome 102. Outcome 102 reduces the player's picks from four to three as indicated by meter 84. The player's award again increases by fifteen to eighty as illustrated by display 86.

15 Screen 138 of Fig. 9 illustrates that upon the player's pick of the pool selection 128, the game yields the "correct" or "advance" outcome 108. The outcome 108 counts against the player's picks as shown in meter 84, and the player's award increases according to table 70 of Fig. 14 by thirty to a total of one hundred ten as seen in display 86.

20 Screen 140 of Fig. 10 illustrates the player's first pick in the selection level four of five as indicated by level indicator 82. The game provides the clue of "flower" and informs the player to pick one of the selections as shown by message 138. Player 100 picks the "things that smell" selection 116, which again yields the "correct" outcome 108. 25 "Correct" outcome 108 counts against the player's picks as indicated by meter 84. The player's award increases according to table 70 of Fig. 14 by forty as seen in award display 86.

Screens 150 and 160 both illustrate the player's final pick in the 30 final selection group. It should be appreciated that depending on the outcomes of the player's prior picks, the player may have no picks in the final selection level, one pick, or have multiple picks in the final selection level. Level indicator 82 indicates that the player is picking from the final level. The final clue and the message to pick one of the selections is provided by message 152. Message 152 indicates that

the final clue is a “famous president”. Selections 154, 156, 158 and 162 each accordingly display the name of a famous president.

Screen 150 illustrates that player 100 selects the “Washington” selection 162. Because the level is the final level, the outcome of the 5 pick is the provision of an award. Table 70 of Fig. 14 illustrates that the awards for the final selection group can vary between one hundred and five hundred. Award display 86 in Figs. 11 and 12 show that the player received the award of three hundred, giving the player a total award for the game of four hundred fifty. The player’s picks are reduced from 10 one to none as illustrated by screens 150 and 160 and the picks remaining meter 84. An award range like the one shown in Fig. 14 for the fifth selection level can be used for any of the selection levels and for any of the different outcomes.

Screen 160 of Fig. 12 illustrates a reveal feature of the present 15 invention. That is, the game reveals or displays each of the awards associated with each of the selections 154, 156, 158 and 162. The reveal feature shows the player the player’s relative success in picking selection 162 as well as the awards that the player could have obtained by picking other selections. It should be appreciated that a reveal 20 screen could be provided after the player picks a selection that yields the “correct” or “advance” outcome 108. Further, the selections could be revealed after the player receives the “pass” outcome 124. In an alternative embodiment, the reveal screen also reveals the correct, try again, pass, and/or award outcomes.

If the game illustrated in Figs. 3 to 12 is a bonus game, the 25 player adds four hundred fifty credits to the player’s credit meter and returns the player to base game play. Otherwise, if the game is a base or primary game, the player is able to reinsert another wager to play the game again.

Screen 170 of Fig. 13 illustrates an alternative embodiment. If 30 the player is fortunate enough to have more than enough picks in the final selection group to pick each of the selections 154, 156, 158 and 162, the game in one embodiment enables the player to return to one or more of the levels in which the player received the “pass” outcome

124 so that the player can exhaust all remaining picks, as illustrated by message 164. In one embodiment, the wagering game returns the player to the lowest “pass” level and allows the player to work up from that level. In another embodiment, the game randomly decides which 5 of two or more “pass” levels with which to return the player.

Award table 70 of Fig. 14 has been discussed previously in connection with the previous Figures illustrating one example of the present invention. Award table 70 increments the “try again” or “repeat” outcome awards by five, the “correct” or “advance” outcome 10 awards by ten and the “pass” outcome awards by fifteen for each level until reaching the final level. The increments for each outcome as well as the relative weight or size of the awards between the different outcomes can vary. It should thus be appreciated that the pass outcome could be less than the correct outcomes. In the illustrated 15 embodiment, for example, the pass outcome is worth more than the correct outcome, which in turn is worth more than the “try again” outcome. In other implementations, the relative weighting changes.

In an alternative embodiment, the game does not pay the player for one or more of the outcomes. For example, the gaming device, in 20 one embodiment, does not pay the player for achieving a “pass” outcome. As discussed above, award ranges can be substituted for the fixed awards. Furthermore, likelihood percentages can be used in connection with different awards for different ranges so that one or more award is more likely to be generated than one or more other 25 awards. In other embodiments, the “correct” or “try again” outcomes can be worth more than the “pass” outcome or all awards could be the same, as desired by the game implementor.

Referring now to Fig. 15, a level selection table 80 stored in memory device 40 is illustrated. In the screen shots of Figs. 3 to 13, 30 each of the award levels presented the player with four selections. In alternative embodiments, the levels include a different number of selections. Further alternatively, two levels can display different amounts of selections. Table 80 illustrates one example where levels one and two display five selections, levels three and four display four

selections and level five displays three selections. Non-final levels include at least two selections in one preferred embodiment.

Table 80 also sets the percent loading of the different outcomes within each level. Level one includes three "try again" or "repeat" 5 outcomes, two "correct" or "advance" outcomes and no "pass" outcomes. Level two includes three "try again" or "repeat" outcomes, one "correct" or "advance" outcome and one "pass" outcome. In one embodiment, the gaming device reduces the ability to advance to the next level either via the "correct" or "pass" outcomes as the levels get 10 higher and higher. The percent loading of the outcomes versus the levels varies based on desirability and game mathematics. It is also possible that one or more of the levels do not include the "correct" outcome. As illustrated, the final or fifth level includes no "correct" or "pass" outcomes.

15 While not illustrated, the game and gaming device of the present invention include an optional fourth type of outcome or "stay" outcome. The "stay" outcome requires the player to pick again from the current selection group but does not count against the player's total number of picks. The "stay" outcomes may or may not yield an award value to the 20 player. In one embodiment, the award value associated with the "stay" outcome is approximately the same as the value associated with the "try-again" outcome.

In an alternative embodiment, the gaming device can enable the player to select a "pass" for a level for the cost of one or more picks or 25 credits (won in the game or as an additional wager). This embodiment enables the player to use a strategy to get to the potentially higher levels quicker and then possibly come back to one or more of the lower levels if the player has picks remaining.

It should also be appreciated that one or more extra picks of the 30 selection can be associated with one or more of the selections including the selection with the "pass" on one or more levels.

It should be understood that various changes and modifications to the presently preferred embodiments described herein will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Such changes and modifications

can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention and without diminishing its intended advantages. It is therefore intended that such changes and modifications be covered by the appended claims.